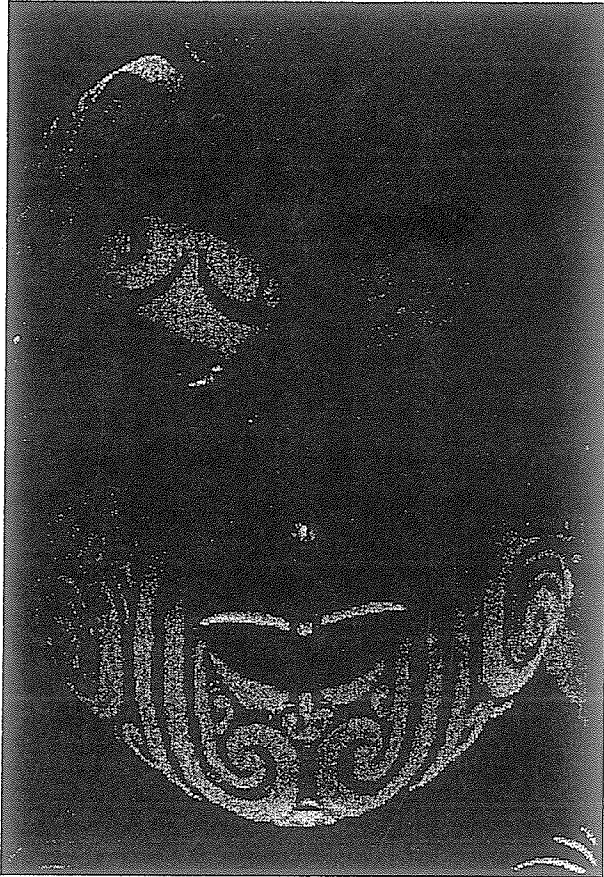
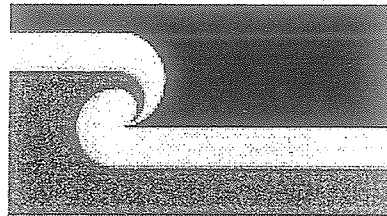


Maori Carving



Flag



Maori History:

The Maori people are the indigenous people of New Zealand. They are Polynesian and comprise about 14% of the country's population. Maoritanga is the native language which is related to Tahitian and Hawaiian. It is believed that the Maori migrated from Polynesia in canoes about the 9th century to 13th century AD.

Dutch navigator Abel Tasman was the first European to encounter the Maori. Four members of his crew were killed in a bloody encounter in 1642. In 1769 British explorer James Cook established friendly relations with some Maori. By 1800, visits by European ships were relatively frequent.

At this time, the Maori population was severely reduced with the arrival of European settlers. War & disease took their toll till eventually the population dropped to about 100,000.

In 1840 representatives of Britain and Maori chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi. This treaty established British rule, granted the Maori British citizenship, and recognized Maori land rights.

Today many of the treaty's provisions are disputed and there has been an effort from the New Zealand Government to recompense Maori Tribes for some land that was illegally confiscated.

The traditional Maori welcome is called a powhiri, this involves a hongi which is a greeting that involves pressing noses as opposed to a kiss.



Another prominent feature of Maori culture are the striking tattoos that were worn. Full faced tattoos or "moko", amongst the Maori tribes was predominantly a male activity. Female forms of moko were restricted to the chin area, the upper lip, and the nostrils. Today there is an increasing number of Maori who are opting to receive their Moko, in an effort to preserve their culture and identity.



A traditional form of cooking called a Hangi is a feast cooked in the earth. Stones are heated in a fire in a dug out pit and covered in cabbage leaves or watercress to stop the food from burning. Mutton, pork, chicken, potatoes and Kumera (a sweet potato) are then unusually lowered into the pit in a basket. The food is covered with Mutton cloth or similar and traditionally with flax. Finally earth is placed on top to keep in the steam. The food takes about 3 hours to cook. The Hangi is still popular and is a viable alternative to a weekend barbecue. The unique taste of food cooked in a Hangi can best be described as steamed food with an earthen flavour.

The present Maori population has increased to about 250,000 and the Maori live in all parts of New Zealand, but predominately in the North Island where the climate is warmer.

The Maori have adapted well to living in 21st century New Zealand, yet they have retained their unique culture, and this rich culture contributes much to New Zealand as a whole.

Maori Origins:

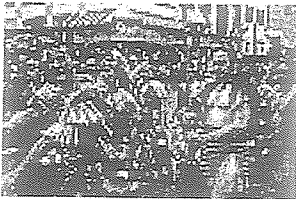
Maori legend says that the Maori came from "Hawaiki", the legendary homeland about 1000 years ago. When the Maori arrived in Aotearoa (New Zealand) they found a land of volcanic activity and snow capped mountains. Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand and means Land of the long white cloud.

Some believe that the Maori found Aotearoa probably by chance as they were probably blown off course. But there is also evidence that the Maori had sophisticated ancient knowledge of the stars and ocean currents and this knowledge is carved in their "whare" (houses).

The term "Whakapapa" is used to describe Maori genealogy. The word "Papa" doesn't mean father but rather anything broad, flat and hard such as a flat rock. Whakapapa means to place in layers and this is the way that different orders of genealogies are looked at. One generation upon another. The Maori term for descendant is uri, its precise meaning is offspring or issue.

Maori Traditions:

Before the coming of the Pakeha (White Man) to New Zealand all literature in Maori was orally passed onto succeeding generations. This included many legends and waiata (song). The most recognised tradition is the "Haka" which is a war dance. The Haka was performed before the onset of war by the Maori last century, but has been immortalized by New Zealand's Rugby Team the All Blacks, who perform this dance before every game.



Maori Religion

The Maori held an essentially spiritual view of the universe. Anything associated with the supernatural was invested with tapu, a mysterious quality which made those things or persons imbued with it either sacred or unclean according to context. Objects and persons could also possess mana, psychic power. Both qualities, which were inherited or acquired through contact, could be augmented or diminished during one's lifetime. All free men were tapu to a degree directly proportional to their rank. Furthermore, an object or resource could be made tapu and therefore off-limits. The punishment for violating a tapu restriction was automatic, usually coming as sickness or death. The Maori had a pantheon of supernatural beings (*atua*). The supreme god was known as Io. The two primeval parents, Papa and Rangi, had eight divine offspring: Haumia, the god of uncultivated food; Rongo, the god of peace and agriculture; Ruaumoko, the god of earthquakes; Tawhirimatea, the god of weather; Tane, the father of humans and god of forests; Tangaroa, the god of the sea; Tu-matauenga, the war god; and Whiro, the god of darkness and evil. There were also exclusive tribal gods, mainly associated with war. In addition, there were various family gods and familiar spirits.

The senior deities had a Priesthood (*tohunga ahurewa*), members of which received special professional training. They were responsible for all esoteric ritual, were knowledgeable about genealogies and tribal History, and were believed to be able to control the weather. Shamans rather than priests served the family gods whom they communicated with through spirit possession and sorcery.

Most public rites were performed in the open, at the marae. The gods were offered the first fruits of all undertakings, and slaves were occasionally sacrificed to propitiate them. Incantations (*karakia*) were chanted in flawless repetition to influence the gods.

Sickness was believed to be caused by sorcery or the violation of a tapu. The proximate cause of illness was the presence of foreign spirits in the sick body. The medical tohunga accordingly exorcised the spirits and purified the patient. The therapeutic value of some plants was also recognized.

The dying and dead were taken to a shelter on the marae. The body was laid out on mats to receive mourners, who came in hapu or tribal groups. After a week or two of mourning the body was wrapped in mats and buried in a cave, in a tree, or in the ground. Often after a year or two the ariki would have the body exhumed, and the bones scraped clean and painted with red ochre, to be taken from settlement to settlement for a second mourning. Afterward, the bones were given a second burial in a sacred place. The spirits of the dead were believed to make a voyage to their final abode, a vague and mysterious underworld.

Taken from : Wilson, Peter. "Maori: Religion and Expressive Culture." *Countries and Their Cultures*. 2010. Advameg, Inc., Web. 1 Feb 2010. <<http://www.everyculture.com/Oceania/Maori-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>>.